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# The AVALANCHE MAKER

by

W. Ryerson Johnson

Author of  
"Gun-Sight Gold,"  
"All Trees and Snow," etc.



He's a little guy, but man  
alive, he throws a whole  
mountain at a murdering  
thief!

**O**LD DAD SUMMERS never fell down no mine shaft. He got *pushed!*"

"That's what *you* say," White Horse Hanson's level voice retorted. "Take it easy, Apples—easy. For yor size and weight, 'Apples' Appleby Jones, you're the excitabest gazop in this whole Yukon backstretch. Yeah, and the plumb wildest guesser."

"Says you!" Apples squawked.

White Horse shrugged his ponderous shoulders and let his glance drift out of the cabin window. Not much to see outside. Just snow heaped under a bleak sky, the sodden snow of March. His eyes roved lazily. High up on Roaring Mountain a single rock ridge outcropped through the glazed blanket, like a rib exposed through gleaming flesh. And far below in the valley wind-swept stretches of ice on the Illucaset River glinted dully.

White Horse regarded his half-pint partner again. "Snag Smedder ain't such a bad egg," he drawled, "if you take him right."

"How'd you take a bad egg right?" Apples yapped. "You big tow-headed Swede, you got imagination like a dead walrus!" The little man leaned forward excitedly in his chair and continued spouting.

"Ten years I been runnin' with you, White Horse," he shouted. "We been in every gold push, you and me,

from Nome to Aklavik. We've made gold strikes and we've made money—and we've had to battle plenty for 'em both. But in ten years I'm a cockeyed mush ox if I ever seen you show any emotion over any of it! Looka here, you gotta start actin' like you belonged to the race of man. If you don't"—he paused impressively—"if you don't, I'm tellin' you we're all gonna be murdered in a week!"

"Huh? Murdered?" White Horse rested the half bale of loose-cut in the side of his jaw.

“Yeah, murdered! You and me and Lanky Jackson. Murdered! Old Dad got his last week. Our turn next. Wait and see.”

“Cheery prospect, ain’t it?” White Horse resumed his stamp-mill motion on the chew of tobacco. Nobody was quite sure if White Horse Hanson got his name from the town of White Horse that rules the destiny of the Canadian Yukon, or from his appearance—his big, blond Scandinavian frame, big fists and big feet, whitish hair and eyebrows.

Apples shot out of his chair like a bristling terrier. “Looka here, White Horse,” he yammered, “we’ve battered the Old Roaring Mountain Mine for better’n a hundred thousand in good gold. Now it’s springtime, and springtime is avalanche time!” Apples was raising his voice with every word. His cherub face was reddening with his excitement. But the volatile little man was not so cherubic as he looked, as many a sourdough spoiling for action had found. He was all nitroglycerine when he got steamed up. That was most of the time.

“Roarin’ Mountain wasn’t called Roarin’ Mountain for nothin’,” he wrangled on. “Up here on this hogback we and the cabin and the hundred thousand gold are safe enough. But the mine, farther down the slope, is gonna be buried under about forty feet of ice and slide-rock. Every spring the slides have been mowin’ down the jack pines closer and closer—”

“Don’t you be tryin’ to stop no avalanche, son,” rumbled White Horse. “Leave the rocks roll.”

**W**HITE HORSE, all your brains is in your jaws,” Apples fumed. “You can’t see no farther’n you can spit. Here we are about to get murdered and— Look here, dimwit, Snag Smedder wasn’t gonna start any dirty work till we had the gold out, was he? No! *We* was needed to get that gold out. All right, it’s mostly out, and we couldn’t work much longer anyway account of danger from avalanches. So now’s Snag’s time, see?” Apples paused, lapped a breath of air and barked on.

“Well, he’s workin’ on schedule. There’s been one ‘accident’ a’ready. Old Dad, he ‘fell’ down the hoistin’ shaft and he’s dead. There’s three more ‘accidents’ on the way quick—one to you, one to me, and one to Lanky Jackson.”

White Horse pawed the half bale from his mouth. He tossed the tobacco into the stove, ran his tongue exploringly from one cheek to the other, licked his lips and swallowed twice. Hitching up his worn corduroys, he looked down upon his half-pint partner.

“Apples,” he rumbled, “you must be goin’ bush-dingy. All them loco ideas—I dunno where you get ‘em. Hell, I don’t cotton to Snag Smedder no more’n you and Lanky does. Always seemed like a sanctimonious sinner to me, and I hate his guts. But maybe I’m wrong. Just because we don’t like him, is that any reason to be

callin’ him a murderer? Have to give the devil his dust— if it wasn’t for Snag Smedder and the cold cash he put up we never could have reopened the old Roarin’ Mountain Mine.”

“We give up enough for his dirty money,” Apples blazed, surly faced. “Who was it that thought of investigatin’ this abandoned mine? Who was it that went down and found where a slip in the rock fold showed up a good payin’ lead that the Company give up tryin’ to locate forty years ago? Who was it, huh? It was you and me and Lanky and Old Dad, that’s who it was. We found it, not Snag Smedder—”

“But Snag put up the money we had to have to get started.”

“All right, big boy, but just the same I’m watchin’ that baby. Young Jones’s packin’ his old six-gun day and night. Yeah, and I’m takin’ other precautions—”

“Hold it,” White Horse ordered. “Listen— Hear snow crunchin’? Someone comin’ up the path—Lanky or Smedder.” He craned his neck to peer out of the frost-rimmed window. It’s Smedder—he’s runnin’.”

“Aw, the hell with him—”

“Shut up,” White Horse cut in. He strode forward and pulled open the door.

**S**NAG SMEDDER, wheezing and gasping, staggered through the doorway and sagged back heavily against the log wall. The man’s thin lips were twisted in a grimace. A wild light gleamed in his eyes. His bony fingers crawled disjointedly over his throat and face, pressing tightly into the parchment-like skin. “Oh Gawd,” he moaned. “Oh Gawd!”

White Horse had his arm about him in an instant. “What is it, Snag? Speak!” He shook him. “What’s the matter?”

“It’s Lanky,” he croaked. “Top came in on us. I—it didn’t get me. But Lanky—he’s dead—”

“What’d I tell you, White Horse?” Apples screamed, and he cleared the space between himself and Smedder in one ferocious leap. His flint-calloused fingers dug into the other’s neck. “Lanky killed in a cave-in? Layin’ dead down there in the mine? Killed? *Murdered!* You mean murdered, you back-knifing carcajou—”

“Quit it!” White Horse roared. Lunging in between the struggling men, he pried Apples’ hands from Smedder’s throat and flung his partner roughly back. “Can’t you see the man’s scared to death already? You fire-snortin’ hellhound, stay back there now. I mean it. Leave Smedder have his say.”

Half-crouched for another spring, Apples glared wildly at his partner. White Horse glared resolutely back. Apples relaxed slowly, breathing hard, fingers clenching and unclenching. He nodded his head in sullen acquiescence. “O.K., White Horse,” he rasped, with an effort holding his voice steady.

Smedder, in gratitude, rolled panic-stricken eyes at White Horse. He straightened up, trembling. Standing erect, he was almost as tall as White Horse. But his frame was spare, bony. His funereal face was thin and sallow.

"About Lanky," he croaked, "not much to say. Accident, see—accident. I'll take you down there. I'll show you. Looks bad for me. I know what you're thinking. I know. But it was accident, see?"

White Horse cut in harshly.

"You acted like a whipped pup when you came in here, Smedder," he said. "Before Apples ever took a pass at you. What was that for?"

Smedder gulped and ran his tongue over his trembling lips. "Apples," he jerked, "thinks I murdered Old Dad Summers last week. So I knew what he'd think about this—this other accident. I was afraid. Afraid of what Apples and maybe you might do to me before I could explain. I wanted to run away—leave my share of the gold and run away. But you can't get out of this cussed country this time of year. So I—I came here to get it over the best way I could." He gulped again. The stricken eyes flashed from one man to the other in furtive appeal.

"Bull!" Apples blurted. "All bull and a mile wide! He's lyin', White Horse. He knows what a soft-hearted mug you are. He wants to hold you off till tomorrow so's he can arrange 'accidents' for us, too."

**A** CHOKING moan escaped Snag Smedder's lips. The tongue licked out again. He raised his hands weakly in supplication to White Horse. "Don't—do anything yet," he pleaded. "I'm innocent. I'm innocent as you. You'll see I am if you wait. And don't let him get at me again, White Horse!" Smedder's glance flashed to Apples and he quailed before the bleak savagery reflected in the face of the hard little prospector. "White Horse," he gasped, piteously, eyes rolling, "don't let him get me!"

"Aw, shut up," Apples blared. "I ain't no executioner. Whattya think, I'm gonna kill you in cold blood? Hey, whattya think I am? I wisht you'd make one pass at me, though! I'd lay you so cold you wouldn't thaw out in the fire pan of hell."

Smedder trembled visibly and shrank closer to White Horse. "You—you take my part of the gold," he whimpered, "and give it to Lanky's and Old Dad's folks. Take it all. I couldn't touch a pinch of it with you and Apples thinkin' I was in some way responsible for these deaths. Maybe you'll find out sometime I ain't the kind of fellow you're thinkin' I am."

"Big hearted, ain't you?" Apples snarled. "Throw away your gold today and cause a couple fatal 'accidents' tomorrow and get it back. Get *all* the gold. Nice!"

"Aw, quit ridin' the poor devil," White Horse directed, a little impressed by Smedder's magnanimous offer.

"O.K.," Apples growled, "but all the same I think he's acting. And from now on young Jones's takin' plenty precautions. It won't be you or me, White Horse, that happens to anymore 'accidents'."

Bold words. There in the homely warmth of the cabin they sounded like big medicine. Forewarned is forearmed. How could anything happen? But something did happen. Apples, the next day, was to recall his brag with a hopeless and a sardonic laugh.

**E**VER since the five men had reopened the old Roaring Mountain Mine, they had been working against time. Against that time when the warm chinooks of spring would rob the snow of its adhesive qualities, and start that twenty-foot wet blanket rolling down the mountain slope with the roar of thunder and speed of an express train.

Experienced Northern men, they kept themselves well informed as to the condition of the snow in order that they might work till the last possible minute. They knew that when the snow was of just the right wetness, so slight a thing as the jarring noise of a bear gun could unleash a destroying avalanche—a wave of snow, ice, slide-rock and match-stick timber that could shake the very mountain.

Double shifting with hand-steel and single-jack, the partners had succeeded in mining most of the ore. But now, with Lanky Jackson and Old Dad out of the game, the rhythmic clank of hammer on steel would beat a slower pulse. The drill would bite but half as fast into the gold-veined quartz.

All in all, the amount of yellow metal which the remaining three men could bring up was insignificant compared to the risk they ran. It was decided, then, on the morning after Lanky's death, that they would clean up what loose stuff remained—less than a day's work—then sit tight in their cabin, safe from the avalanche menace, till the ice-locked waterways should open and afford them a passage back to the land of men.

Apples and Smedder went below to send up the loose quartz. White Horse stayed on top to man the windlass and backpack the ore to the stamp mill.

While the sun was yet slanting its morning rays over the white rim of the range, White Horse, turning from the mill for another burden of ore, was surprised to see Smedder climbing out of the mine shaft.

The funereal-faced miner approached at an awkward jog, his oil lamp clacking in his cap bracket and trailing smoke.

"Where's Apples?" he blurted, as he came close. "Did Apples come up?"

“Whaddya mean—Did Apples come up?” White Horse, startled, asked harshly. A sudden chill premonition brought goose flesh out all over him.

Smedder stopped, breathing noisily. He twisted the toe of his pit shoe in the beaten snow of the path.

“Y’see,” he explained, as though hunting his words, “I left Apples scoopin’ up ore there in the Rainbow Drift, and I went into the crosscut to get a quartz bar. When I came back he was—gone. I looked around for him some and hollered.” That tongue ran nervously over the lips. The eyes rolled shiftily. “He did come up, didn’t he?”

For a long moment White Horse was still with a terrible stillness. Slowly his lids clamped together till his blue eyes were only slits. About the corners of his jaw the muscles bunched in ridges. His fists clenched.

**E**VERY man has his boiling point. White Horse’s imperturbable calm was at last broken. And what it took to break it was the thought of his partner lying cold and bloody in a granite grave far under ground.

As Smedder watched the change that came over White Horse, his own sallow face turned a pastier yellow. He sagged suddenly at the knees.

Then White Horse went into action. Reaching out, he yanked up the whimpering Smedder by the scruff of the neck. Choked and shook him till the eyes bulged and the long face turned red as the morning sun. The pit cap with its smoking flame flew off Smedder’s head, and the fire snuffed out in the snow. Suddenly White Horse let go his hold. Smedder dropped gasping at his feet.

“You rat!” White Horse blared. “I should of let Apples wring your scrawny neck for you yesterday.” He prodded the groaning man with his foot. “You’re not hurt—get up. We’re goin’ down in the mine, you and me. We’re gonna find Apples. We’re gonna find him alive. You hear? Get up!”

“White Horse,” Smedder whined as he arose, clawing at his bruised throat, “you got me all wrong—”

“You’re *in* wrong,” White Horse roared him down. “I mean *wrong*. You mealy-mouthed son-’a-Satan, it ain’t gonna be no fun for me to choke the life out of a spineless rat that won’t fight back. But if you’ve killed Apples, I’ll put you away with my own bare hands. Now get along!”

Smedder, babbling his innocence, stumbled down the path. White Horse strode close behind. At the shaft-head Smedder stepped meekly aside to allow White Horse to go first.

“No you don’t,” the big miner chopped. “You first. Down you go.”

White Horse thought he caught a look of baffled rage in Smedder’s eyes. But that look passed so quickly that he doubted his own vision. Smedder’s expression as he grasped the top rung of the ladder was at once so grieved

and so patiently resigned that White Horse felt a slight misgiving.

“If I’m wrong about this,” he said grudgingly, “I’ll have plenty of time to apologize later. But if I’m right, it’s gonna save my life, and maybe Apples’.”

At the bottom of the shaft, fifty feet below the surface, White Horse lifted a pit lamp from its niche in the granite wall, and lit up.

“Whatever you want me to do, I’ll do,” Smedder spoke up with a sudden show of spirit. “Whether you believe me or not, I’m as anxious to find Apples as you are. Partly it’s to prove I’m not the—”

“Yeah?” White Horse grated noncommittally. “Well, this ain’t no time for back slappin’. Come on. We’ll start up this Northwest drift first. No.” He paused briefly and a calculating look flickered in his eyes. “I’ll tell you—I’ll give you one more chance. I’ll take this Northwest drift, and you go up the Northeast. We’ll cover more territory quicker that way. First one that finds anything—come lookin’ for the other. Got that? No, don’t dog-lick me. I’m trustin’ you because it looks like it’s best for Apples, that’s all. You try any funny business while we’re apart and you’ll end up by bein’ wolf feed.”

**W**HITE HORSE hurried as he headed up the narrow passage, and that same calculating look burned in his eyes. His flickering yellow lamp flame pushed away the utter darkness for a short space in front of him as he moved. At his back the darkness closed in again.

Considering its long abandonment, the Roaring Mountain Mine was in a good state of preservation. This Northwest drift along which White Horse loped continued on for half a mile. Rainbow Drift, Apples had rechristened it, because at its end they had discovered the gold. Steeply up-mountain the Rainbow Drift ran, roughly paralleling the surface slope. At the far end of this half-mile cavern the gold-bearing quartz had cut sharply upward through the rock formation so that the workings were very close to the surface.

White Horse did not continue on to the end of the Rainbow. Instead, he turned very soon into a crosscut, blew out his light and felt his way along the dark passage as silently and rapidly as possible. This short crosscut connected with the Northeast drift, down which Smedder had started. At the entry neck White Horse clambered over a pile of slack and crouched back against the dark rib wall to wait for Smedder.

From the first, when they had parted at the bottom of the shaft to go their separate ways, it had been White Horse’s intention to cut through here and intercept Smedder. He wondered now if the man thought he was a dumb one for suggesting the split-up.

Well, it didn’t matter what that lean rat thought. No. Smedder would come on, and he, White Horse, would

close in behind him. It wouldn't take long then to learn if Smedder was sincerely searching. And if he was not—

There was only one thing wrong with White Horse's detective stuff. He didn't detect anything. He waited and waited. No yellow light came bobbing down the drift.

His face hardened. So Smedder had turned back, had he? All right, this in itself showed that something was cockeyed. He scratched a match across the worn seat of his corduroys, lit his lamp. Grimly, he started clumping down the drift toward the shaftway. If the slinking carcajou had done anything to Apples—God help him!

At the bottom of the hoisting shaft White Horse hesitated a moment. Above him there he could glimpse a patch of blue sky. Could Smedder have climbed out? Instinctively his hands groped for a rung of the ladder.

There wasn't any ladder!

**A**LMOST on the heels of this discovery came a scraping noise at the top of the shaft. White Horse looked up. Smedder was there now. He was leaning over, looking down. White Horse heard a harsh, clacking sound—Smedder's laugh—which reverberated into the shaft with ghostly unreality. Then, as White Horse looked, Smedder drew back his arm and hurled a chunk of ore.

The ore *clagged* into the loose rock of the mine floor. A second chunk caught White Horse on the leg as he lurched to one side. Other missiles followed. Standing back out of range from above, White Horse rubbed at his bruised thigh muscles and shouted angrily up.

Smedder's answering voice sounded hollowly back. "Who's gonna be wolf feed now?" he taunted. "I've had to stand a lot from you, but now's when I cash in. Hell, but you're a dumb sap, White Horse. You're so easy," he grated, "that's why I saved you for last. First, Old Dad, then Lanky, then Apples—now you. And I've got all the gold—"

"What'd you do to Apples?" White Horse roared. "You murderin' snake, where's Apples?"

That gloating laugh waved eerily down the shaft.

"You know how wet the snow is on the mountain?" Smedder asked. "Well, take a guess what a stick of dynamite half a mile up the slope will do. Dynamite—when all it takes to start an avalanche is a handful of snow droppin' off a spruce branch. Get the idea? I rub my tracks out with avalanches! Yeah, avalanche maker—that's me. There won't be no sign of this mine left. This shaft-head'll be buried forty feet deep under slide rock. You'll have a tomb that nobody won't get into for a million years. And me—why I'll just sit in the cabin till the ice goes out of the rivers, then me and the hundred thousand'll go floatin' down the Illucaset."

"What'd you do to Apples?" White Horse thundered again, jamming his words together till they sounded like a single roar, so great was his rage against this human fiend.

"Apples?" the chill voice sounded down. "You'll find the body of the sawed-off runt near the end of the Rainbow. I don't know if he's croaked or not. If you hoof it in there *hiya* quick you'll get a chance to look at what's left of him before my avalanche chokes up the shaft. We'll be walkin' the same way, won't we? Me on top the snow and you under the ground in the mine tunnel. What a hell of a difference a few feet make, huh?"

White Horse used two valuable minutes hurling tongue-sizzling words up the shaft before he became aware that Smedder had gone. Then, with his own words echoing hollowly in his ears, he turned and started running up the Rainbow Drift.

His hobnail shoes clumped loudly in the slack of the roadway. His lamp flame flickered. It conjured up fleeting grotesque shadows which raced across the walls and roof and floor.

With an effort White Horse conquered his blind rage. He wanted to think. Smedder, the rat, had a little head start on him. But that didn't matter. The scurvy murderer would be toiling up the steep slope on snowshoes. Slow. White Horse'd beat Smedder to the end of the Rainbow. Beat him easily. And maybe he'd get a few minutes with Apples.

**W**HITE HORSE met Apples walking down the roadway near the end of the Rainbow. The big miner's heart sank as he took in the details of his partner's condition—the pale face, the blood-matted hair, the shirt, stiff with drying blood. But his spirits soared momentarily as Apples stood firmly clasping his hand, and assuring him that he was all right.

"S O.K.," the cocky little man protested. "Looks worse'n it is. But my lights was sure out for awhile." He grinned, and continued spouting with all his old fire. "He crocked me over the head with a chunk of granite, that's what he done, White Horse. I told you that snivelin' snake was a killer. Where is he? We'll get him now. Where is he?"

In a few words White Horse told what had happened. Apples cut loose with a string of curses hot enough to have melted gold out of quartz.

"It ain't no use." White Horse shook his head wearily. "I said all them things before. I'd fight, but there's nothin' to fight. How does a fella go about preparin' to die?"

"Die!" Apples snorted. "You're crazy, big boy. Somebody's gonna die, but it ain't us. Not if I can help it. Hey, gimme that light." He reached up and snatched the lamp from White Horse's cap. "Come on," he shouted. "Foller me."

The little man went scurrying down the Rainbow Drift, White Horse crashing bewilderedly after. Frantically they clambered up the steep slope of the narrowing cavern. Almost at the end of the lead Apples

halted so suddenly that White Horse, plunging along directly behind, collided with him and tramped him down.

"Hey, offa my neck, you damn' war tank," Apples yowled.

Scrambling to his feet, Apples hefted a piece of rock and crashed it against a nearby timber. He had set this timber himself the day after Old Dad Summers had been killed. Flush against the rib wall he had set the prop—flush and tight. Roof needed support here, he said.

"You half-pint peanut," White Horse shouted protest. "You'll have the top cavin' in on us!"

"Shut up! Grab a rock! Help me!" Apples hollered.

But he didn't need help. The timber gave away at his next onslaught, smashing against White Horse's shoulder and knocking him down.

"Now we're even, you big beef," Apples laughed shortly, without looking around. "It was an accident, though. Believe it or not."

White Horse floundered to his feet to find his partner busily at work scraping rock dust from a small round hole in the wall. "What the hell—looks like a drill hole."

"It ain't nothin' else *than*," Apples affirmed. "I made this hole and I set the timber to hide it. There's dynamite in here"—he fished around with his finger and pulled out a short length of fuse—"and she's all set to blow!"

**W**ITH no preliminaries, Apples held his cap flame to the end of the fuse. Powder sputtered. Gangway, you tow-whiskered moose," he bellowed. "Get out of the road! I'm comin'."

White Horse went, too.

In the safety of the first spur the partners crouched, awaiting the detonation.

"Never did trust Smedder," Apples explained. "And I told you I was takin' precautions, didn't I? Sure I did. Well, this was it. I never thought about that Skagway Scum guidin' an avalanche down on us, but I did think how easy it would be for him to bust the shaft ladders and lock us down here. So I fixed us up this exit just in case. You know how close to the open-air surface the vein curves at this end? Well, this charge'll blast us a way out easy."

"Yeah," White Horse admitted cautiously, "unless we're already minin' under that ridge."

"I don't think we are. I've figured pretty close. That's the only chance we take."

"You're forgettin' about Smedder. If he's already on the ridge, and he dumps his avalanche on us about the time we poke our heads out—"

*Boo—oo—m!*

The explosion burst on their ears with bludgeoning sound throbs. The floor seemed to heave. There was no wind, but some unseen force seemed to take them in its grip. Their light was plucked out and they were thrown violently to the floor.

Short lived, the dynamite roar. But for seconds after it had died away, a tremendous pressure drummed in their ears. They got to their feet when this soundless drumming ceased. Apples relit the pit lamp.

The light rays were swallowed up in a billowing cloud of smoke and dust and did not penetrate more than arm's length. Somewhere out in that yellowish fog the partners could hear an occasional loose sliver of rock clatter down from the roof.

Had the dynamite blasted a way out for them? No way to tell. They groped forward into the Rainbow Drift. Here the fog was more agitated.

"Feel cooler to you here?" Apples asked tensely.

The question was answered for them both as a wave of cold air struck their sweat-streaked faces.

Apples whooped.

White Horse grinned guardedly. "All right so far. She's broke through." He started forward. "Come on. Sooner we get out of here the better."

For an instant Apples held back. "Wait'll this top settles, dimwit. You're gonna git clipped with a chunk of fall-in' rock."

"Smedder's avalanche'll smack us down harder," White Horse flung back grimly.

"You win," Apples called cheerfully. "Outa my way, big boy."

Groping, stumbling, twisting, squirming, they worked their way up through a devil's maze of broken rock and boulders and granulated snow.

Apples was the first to poke his head outside. He gasped as his glance swept the mountain slope below. He opened his mouth to talk, gasped again. For once the little man was utterly speechless. He motioned jerkily for White Horse to hurry.

"Gawd!" White Horse expressed the sentiments of each.

Below them a seething white wave of packed snow was sweeping down the mountain slope. Already it had gathered momentum and was commencing to sound its dreaded roar. Avalanche roar!

"Look!" White Horse's voice sounded above the tumult that was shaking the mountain. His fingers dug into Apples' shoulder. "Look! Off to that side. Smedder! He's trying to get clear! He'll make it—he'll—No—no!" The fingers gripping Apples' shoulder relaxed. The hand fell away.

As though the gods of the mountain were determined to see justice done, an arm of the avalanche had reared high and fanned out to one side, bearing down upon the hapless Smedder even in the instant when it had seemed he would win to safety.

For one tense second the murderer was pitilessly outlined against that onrushing wave. The next instant the seething white wall had engulfed him.

Later, when the roar was gone from the mountain, and the partners, heading for their cabin, were picking

their way over the treacherous stone fragments, White Horse paused for an instant to look about him. On all sides was an area of fresh desolation stripped bare of snow and trees and boulders. A hell's jumble of gray slide-rock.

White Horse let his big hand fall on his partner's shoulder. Apples staggered but bore up. "Half pint,"

White Horse rumbled, "them was powerful precautions you took. Your thunder-stick not only blows a way out of the mine for us, but it starts a snow slide that gives Smedder a dose of his own medicine. Appleby Jones—avalanche maker! Little man, will you looka the mess you made outa this mountain!"

## **“Horse Heaven’s Elephant Hunt”**

*Side-splitting laughs*

*by*

**W. C. Tuttle**

NEXT WEST

